



## hair dye



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### Chapter 1 by Maeghyn Shoemaker

"Let's start the bidding at fifty thousand."

Every hand leaps into the air. The small bottle of blonde hair dye, probably half used, could save one of us from a life of despair.

Slowly the price climbs. Brown haired men and women fill the room, even more than usual. No, you won't find a blonde down here, nor a redhead. This is the black market. Here we beg and bargain for extra rations, sometimes small items of pleasure, but nothing like this. With one magical bottle, we could become part of the upper class.

"...eight hundred thousand.."

For most people this is their life savings, plus their retirement fund. I sold my house. I feel confident no one will outbid me. I have just over a million dollars, collected from everyone in my family of ten. They all gave the money to me because my hair is the lightest already, so it would work best.

"...nine hundred thousand..."

It is just me and one other bidder now, but I can tell by his pained expression he only has a bit more...

"One million?"

Mine is the only hand raised.

The dye is mine. Eyes glared at me. Angry. But I didn't mind the hate.

My life was about to change. Making it in my hands was all too tedious. My hands should be free. This used, gold and white

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bottle held the hopes to my new future. A chance to experience what the upper class does...yet I was a little afraid. All these emotions all in one container.it's numinous.

I took it home close to my chest. I wasn't going to lose this for anything!

I walked slowly while I admired the bottle. The lid was white and the bottle itself was white trimmed with a frilly, metallic gold design. In the middle of it, was a golden border surrounding the brand name colored black.

"Golden Ticket"

It was a name that fit perfectly, Because this? This was MY golden ticket to a new start. I carefully shook it. I heard the liquids splash around, but it wasn't full. Only about half remained. I have to protect this!

Out of the corner of my eye, I see a large figure approach. I hold the bottle tighter and speed up. But so did they. I couldn't help it, so I turned around and saw the man's face. The same man who was bidding against me. I clenched to bottle so hard it almost hurt my hand. But I stopped, and completely faced him. I studied his face. He was a boy, 15 or so, around my age. He wore a large grey hoodie and jeans, like most locals here. His eyes were blue, and his face was soft and seemed somewhat kind, and tender.

"Um excuse me.... Did you need something?"

"Uh...No..." He turns and walks into the crowd.

Confused, I try to find him, but I realize I'm holding a bottle of blond hair dye, and someone could easily rob me. I give up and try to find my family instead, careful to stay towards the edges of the crowd. I spot my sister, who was born a year after me. She was always jealous of me, thinking I always got better things than her.

"So, you're going off to the rich people now, aren't you?" She looks hurt and looks me in the eye, her dark brown hair framing her face.

"Look, Rachel, I didn't sign up for this. I'm happy, sure, but I'll have to live my whole life thinking about my family and friends. I'm leaving all of you, and if you were in my place, you'd feel torn." I reply.

It's true. Mom insisted that I get the hair dye, the moment she saw the ad in the newspaper. If I go to the upper class, I can't be seen with my friends or family anymore. I'll have to hide from

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Someone lightly taps my shoulder, and I turn around quickly, my reflexes being really quick. It's just my mom, but in this place, you need to always have your guard up. There are some people in this place who are willing to steal to live a "better" life.

"Mom! You scared me." I say.

"Sorry. Oh honey, I'll miss you so much. I'm so proud of you. Some people just glare at you jealously, but I understand. It's gonna be so hard leaving all of us here." She wraps me in a tight hug, knowing it's gonna be the last I'm ever gonna share with her.

"Mom, what am I going to do without you guys?"

"Well, I know you'll be fine. You're a strong girl. Do you want to go to the bathroom to dye your hair now? The train's going to be here soon." She asks.

The train comes from the upper-class area, and we give them products we make in factories, and they return food, raw materials for the factories only and other basic supplies. Many of us "Fake Blondes" have escaped with the train, hiding in one of the compartments.

"Well, alright mom. Wish me luck."

"I love you. Good luck, okay. Be strong." She kisses the top of my head.

I walk to the old public bathroom, pushing the rusted metal door open. It's empty. I sigh in relief. It wasn't always this way, but when something becomes rare, it becomes desired. Obsessively desired.

And blondes were dying out.

There wasn't a war or apocalypse that brought the entire country to base one's worth on hair color. There wasn't an evil dictator or radical law. It was us. It was the 21st century blonde, skinny ideal that crept out of the history text books and back into the public's mind. Instead, those who didn't fit the beauty standard weren't just shamed. They were shunned socially, and not allowed to be seen with the beautiful, with the platinum blonde hair shining just out of view in the nicer parts of town.

It started small. Those with mousy brown hair felt uncomfortable to stand near the blondes. When you stand beside something so beautiful, you can't help but feel worse about yourself. Soon, that insecure avoidance turned to social practice. You did NOT stand near a blonde, in fear of dirtying their purity. In fear of damaging the lovely shades of yellow and tints of white

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started in urban areas, and soon enough the whole country was divided in a similar way.

Uptown- everything from the border to the river was untouchable to the rest.

Brunettes were seen as the majority. Dirty, unclean, mousy, boring. Brunettes were plain and generally regarded as lazy, though the entire production of supplies was down in Lowtown, far from the beautiful. It was the brunettes who took home low wages in order to manufacture the glamorous luxuries for the blondes. Those with black hair shared the same fate. Next were the redheads, who had it far worse. These were the people who were refused jobs and shelter because the color of their hair might "startle" the patrons.

We never needed a corrupt government to bring the entire country into a new form of prejudice.

We did this to ourselves. I locked the door of the bathroom behind me, and stood in front of the dirty mirror. I sighed one last time at my horrible brown hair. without hesitating, I dye my hair. I make sure each one gets enough dye.

And then, I wait.

After about fifteen minutes, I finally take it off. I nearly have a heart attack. I grab the bottle from the shelf above the sink. Empty.

In the mirror, I see a half brunette, half blond girl. My eyes tear up, and I sit on the closed toilet, bawling my eyes out. How could I have spent all my money, my family's money, to have this crap as a result? I look once more in the mirror. I've got to try. I grab a rubber band from around my wrist, and lift the dark part of my hair into a pony tail, and lift my hood up. I unlock the door and walk out from the bathroom, letting my blond hair hang down. I see people staring, jealous.

They obviously can't see my brown side.

I jump on the train, and head for the compartment I've been told about. I enter it and notice four other kids my age. I sit beside one of the girls, who has long blond locks hanging down from her shoulders. "So what was your color" she asks me. As an answer I reveal my brown side. Her eyes grow wide, and one of the boys even laughs. "Didn't work so well, huh?" he chuckles. I shoot him a dark look, and he immediately stops. "How much that mistake cost ya?" a girl sitting by the window asks me, while biting in an apple. "A million". Her jaw drops "oh. Wow. Mine was black. I was lucky I found some in a garbage can. There were just enough drops left for this". She reveals

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